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NOIA 75-5155

October 30, 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence
SUBJECT : Telling the Intelligence Story

1. Problem

How can we tell the intelligence story better?

2. Position of the Congressional Committees

None anticipated.

3. Discussion

a. Publicity on the CIA in the last year has not resulted in a rounded story. Much attention has been focused on specific sensational bits and pieces of information. Agency efforts to put these events into perspective generally have not gotten the wide publicity given the original allegations and revelations.

b. Altering this situation will require patience and a gradual approach. It will also require a more open and forthcoming attitude in the Agency's dealings with the media, which provide our only significant access to the American public. In large measure the Agency will have to await appropriate invitations and opportunities. We should then focus on subjects that allow us to tell a rounded story.

c. There are several specific approaches we can follow with the media:

-- We can collaborate with the media when asked to do so in developing feature articles, articles for publication on selected topics, or television features. Sample topics appear at Tab A. The Directorates should be polled for other suitable subjects. OK

-- We can provide more backgrounders for columnists and editorial writers. The present program for providing substantive background briefings should be expanded as opportunities arise. We should focus particularly on the subject of the future of the CIA and the Intelligence Community. Focusing on the future, however, requires that there be an agreed upon Agency position or, at a minimum, agreed upon options such as those presented in the Study Group Report. OK

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--We can plan a somewhat expanded rate of acceptance of offers of public appearances and speeches by senior Agency officials. Presentations can be tailored to fit the occasion. Senior Agency officers other than the DCI and DDCI should be made available more frequently to help carry this load. OK

--We can make public unique CIA contributions to the advancement of technology and keeping the peace. Already extant film on "The Corona Story" could be cut and edited for public showing or new film, stories, or features could be produced. This reopens "the fact of" issue. ?

d. Two groups not related to the media could also be used selectively to help tell the true story of intelligence.

--We can approach respected senior statesmen for assistance either directly or indirectly through, for example, people such as John McCone. Such assistance could take the form of statements indicating the important contribution of intelligence in foreign policy formulation or the importance of retaining an objective and unbiased source of national intelligence. Alternatively, selected senior statesmen could simply be briefed on the current difficulties without any direct request for their help. A list of such people would have to be developed in consultation with the Deputy Directors and the approach to each person worked out on an individual basis. OK

--We can provide judicious assistance to selected former Agency employees and retirees who want to defend the CIA in books, articles, or public appearances. "Judicious" and "selected" are the operative words. DEFINITELY NO!

4. Recommendations

a. That the DCI decide which of the options listed in paragraphs 3 c and d above should be pursued.

b. That the Assistant to the Director be instructed to implement the selected programs in consultation with the appropriate Directorates.

Samuel V. Wilson
Lieutenant General, USA
Chairman, Ad Hoc Task Group

TAB A

Sample Topics for Feature Articles, Backgrounders, or
Television Features

1. The Operations Center: The functioning of the CIA Operations Center and its role in ensuring that the right information gets to the right people--fast--is not classified. With proper security precautions, it should be possible to make a genuinely interesting feature for television placement on a program such as Sixty Minutes. The feature would largely have to be developed by outsiders.

2. Personality Interviews: Interviews with senior Agency officials for "personality profiles" could be arranged. The interviewer, his intended audience, and the official would have to be matched on a highly selective basis.

3. Current Intelligence: The process of producing daily current intelligence is unclassified. A feature--perhaps centered around a specific analyst--could be tailored either for a scholarly publication or done in an upbeat manner for film or television. The feature could be done by an outsider given access to appropriate DDI officers.

4. Academic Skills: A feature story could be prepared by an outsider on the spread of academic skills in CIA. The story could be done for a scholarly publication or could be filmed for use in college recruitment.

5. Counter-intelligence: The CI Staff is developing and coordinating an unclassified paper explaining the positive side of counter-intelligence work, using a few sanitized composite case studies. The paper can be used to develop a feature article or as the basis for public presentations before selected audiences, such as the Brookings Executive Seminar. The Defector Program might also lend itself to such treatment.

6. Backgrounders: These will largely have to respond to the issue of the moment, e.g., Sam Adams' charges of intelligence misfeasance or malfeasance regarding Vietnamese order of battle figures; the notion that intelligence can be expected to predict with precision coups or revolutions, particularly in friendly countries; or the importance of maintaining access to fragile communications intelligence and the damage that can be done by revealing the seemingly harmless "four little words." The DDs and ADDs and other senior officers could begin to provide such backgrounders as quickly as possible following the development of the issue.

MEMORANDUM FOR:



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For Friday meeting. No new ideas
here; proposing to forward to DCI.

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